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C O N F I D E N T I A L DJIBOUTI 001390

SIPDIS

PARIS, LONDON FOR AFRICA WATCHER

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SUBJECT: NIGERIAN PRESIDENT OBASANJO'S BRIEF, UNANNOUNCED
VISIT TO DJIBOUTI

Classified By: Pol/Econ Erinn C. Reed for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (U) Nigerian President Olesugun Obasanjo made a brief, unannounced visit to Djibouti 30 October while en route to Japan. The government run newspaper La Nation reported on 1 November that during his time in Djibouti, Obasanjo met with President Ismail Omar Guelleh at the Djiboutian head of state's private residence. According to La Nation the two Presidents discussed Somalia, Darfur, southern Sudan, and the request for African Union peacekeepers in Somalia.

2. (U) On the issue of Somalia and the request for peacekeepers by newly elected President Abdillahi Yousseuf, both Guelleh and Obasanjo reportedly expressed the desire to send their nations' troops to Somalia as part of a contingent of peacekeepers. Both also shared the same views regarding other support that might be needed by the new Somali government. La Nation commented that this was the same process carried out after the 2000 peace conference in Arta, Djibouti but the international community at that time did not follow up.

3. (U) La Nation reported that the two presidents also discussed Darfur and North-South Sudan talks underway in Kenya. No details were provided but the upcoming United Nations Security Council (UNSC) meeting on Darfur to take place in Kenya, was noted.

4. (C) Working level contacts in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs told Embassy Political Assistant several nominal details. The Obasanjo's visit was merely the length of his layover in Djibouti while waiting to fly to Japan. Originally, Guelleh was to meet Obasanjo in the VIP lounge at the airport but Guelleh requested discussions take place at his private residence not far from the airport. Sources also say the two Presidents discussed from where the funding for peacekeepers would come. Regarding peacekeepers, the same source commented that since Ethiopia volunteered to send troops to Somalia, Djibouti would do the same. The general impression in Djibouti, as commented by one source, is that if one of the three countries on the frontlines with Somalia (Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti) is in, the other two will send troops.

5. (U) Ambassador will seek more information from Ministry officials to elaborate on the topics discussed and corroborate information given by unofficial contacts at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
RAGSDALE